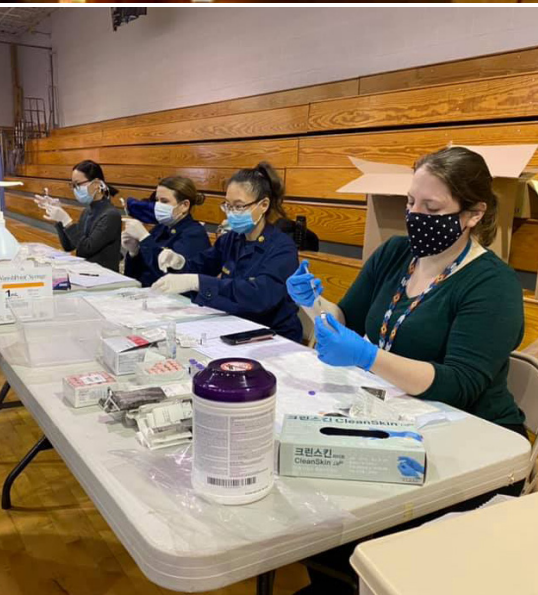




OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT Central Agency Council Report April 10, 2021



WELCOME MESSAGE

We are praying for all of our Diné people to remain strong, hopeful, and resilient during these challenging times. While the COVID-19 pandemic reminds us of our shared challenges, it also demonstrates how kinship, resiliency, and compassion connects each of us during difficult times. We must remember that our people have stood against many adversities before, and we can continue to overcome obstacles facing our nation united.

We encourage families to stay within the safety their homes with only their immediate household members. Traditionally, we would gather together with relatives, friends, and community members to share meals and stories, but this year we have to protect our elders and family members with underlying health conditions from any virus infections. Staying home and taking care of our children and elders is the safest preventative measure you can do.

We may miss our relatives and friends, but we must stay vigilant and safe and let it allow us to be thankful for the blessings of our families and well-being. We must remain positive and encourage each other to make tomorrow better than today and to make the future better for our children.

During this time, consider and reflect on how our ancestors led the way forward through the practices of T'áá hwó' ajít'éego, or self-reliance, K'é, kinship, Tsodizin, prayer, and other principles during hard times. Our Navajo values and principles make us people of hope, faith, strength, and compassion. Therefore, we must stand united to combat the modern-day monsters that plague our communities.

With positive thoughts and actions, let us be the people our ancestors and elders need us to be in the time of hardship. They have blessed us with discipline, prayers, and teachings to move forward, and we have all the tools needed to ensure a better future for future generations.

Comfort our people who have experienced loss and pray for our frontline warriors who protect us every day. We have to motivate each other as one people to overcome this pandemic. We can remind each other what we are capable of and restore and heal each other.

We can do this as we stand united because our ancestors have done it before. They have worked hard, sacrificed, and invested in what they believed would make a difference for us. That is who we are as sacred people. We are embedded with discipline, resilience, strength, compassion, and faith. In these moments, we use these sacred teachings to move forward towards a brighter and healthier future. Ahe'hee'

JONATHAN NEZ
NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT

MYRON LIZER
NAVAJO NATION VICE PRESIDENT

CONTENT

Navajo Nation confirms first case of the B.1.429 variant first identified in the state of California, health officials urge more residents to get vaccinated	4
26 new cases, 16,430 recoveries, and no recent deaths related to COVID-19, Stay-At-Home Order reinstated for Navajo Nation residents	5
Nez-Lizer Administration approves over \$54 million for heavy equipment needs and water infrastructure projects at the local level	6
Navajo Nation opposes Arizona bill that opens door to segregating Navajo and Hopi people and drastically reducing funds for direct services	7
President Nez And Vice President Lizer approve resolution to fund the Navajo Veterans Administration for the remainder of FY 2021 to help veterans	8
President Nez discusses the American Rescue Plan Act and other priorities with Congressman O'Halleran	8
Deb Haaland becomes the first Native American confirmed to lead the U.S. Department of the Interior	10
State of Arizona officially recognizes National Navajo Code Talkers Day	10
Vice President Lizer commends NTEC's Community Heating Resource Program that provides free coal to navajo families	11
Three branch chiefs hold initial discussion on the American Rescue Plan Act	12
Navajo Nation recognizes the month of April as "Sexual Assault Awareness Month" acknowledging victims, survivors, and advocates	13
Tom Platero appointed to serve as the Division Director for the Navajo Nation Division of General Services	14
Congress approves the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan to provide COVID-19 relief, stimulus checks, unemployment benefits	15

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NAVAJO NATION CONFIRMS FIRST CASE OF THE B.1.429 VARIANT FIRST IDENTIFIED IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, HEALTH OFFICIALS URGE MORE RESIDENTS TO GET VACCINATED

On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez was joined by Navajo Department of Health Executive Director Dr. Jill Jim, Navajo Area IHS officials, and Dr. Laura Hammitt with John Hopkins University, as he announced the first confirmed case of the COVID-19 B.1.429 variant on the Navajo Nation, which came from a test sample obtained in the Chinle Service Unit area. The variant was first identified in the state of California and has since been detected across the southwest U.S.

This is the second COVID-19 variant of concern that has been identified on the Navajo Nation. On March 30, the Navajo Department of Health announced the first case of the U.K. variant found in the western portion of the Navajo Nation.

“Everyone should be informed about the two variants that have been identified here on the Navajo Nation. There is still much to be learned about the B.1.429 variant, commonly known as the California variant. At this point, the California variant has been detected in all of the states that surround the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Department of Health continues to work with states and other partners to conduct surveillance to help identify if there are more variant cases. We have to continue taking all precautions by wearing one or two masks, avoiding medium to large in-person gatherings, practicing social distancing, getting tested if symptoms occur, and washing your hands often,” said President Nez.

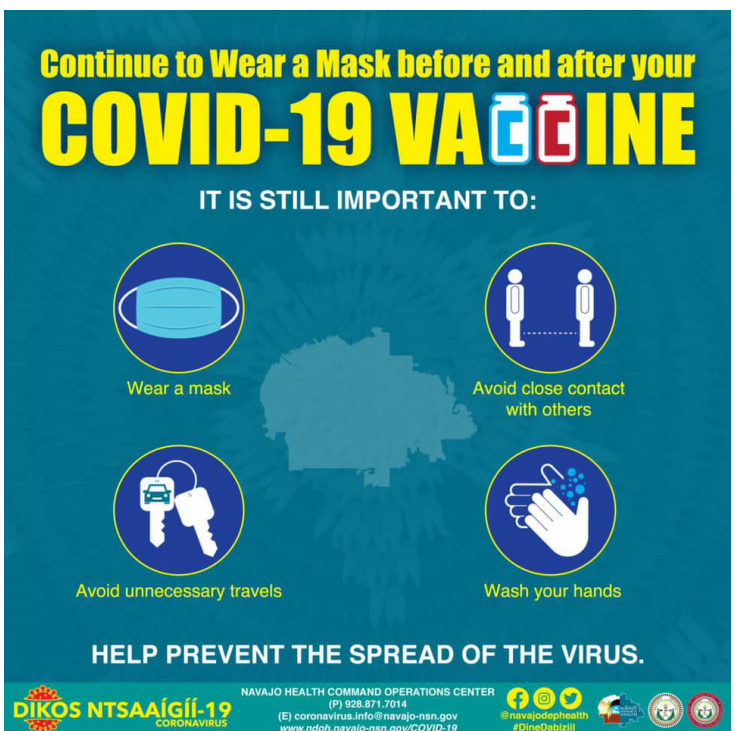
According to the Navajo Department of Health, the person who tested positive for the B.1.429 variant has recovered. Contact tracing has been completed. The Navajo Epidemiology Center, under the Navajo Department of Health and Health Command Operations Center, continues to coordinate with states and other testing facilities to sequence samples for the variants.

The B.1.429 variant is notable because it has increased transmissibility, meaning that it can spread from person to person at a greater rate. One of the monoclonal antibody treatments (bamlanivimab) has limited activity against the B.1.429 variant. However, other monoclonal antibody treatments are available that are effective.

“We already know how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and it’s no different with the two variants that have now been identified on the Navajo Nation. If we isolate the ourselves, we isolate the virus and that’s why it’s very important to get tested if you feel symptoms related to COVID-19. The

quicker that a person isolates themselves after being notified of a positive test result, the greater chance of reducing the spread. We have to remain diligent and support one another. We will overcome this pandemic, but we have to do it together,” said Vice President Lizer.

For more information, including helpful prevention tips, and resources to help stop the spread of COVID-19, visit the Navajo Department of Health’s COVID-19 website: <http://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>. For COVID-19 related questions and information, call (928) 871-7014.



26 NEW CASES, 16,430 RECOVERIES, AND NO RECENT DEATHS RELATED TO COVID-19, STAY-AT-HOME ORDER REINSTATED FOR NAVAJO NATION RESIDENTS

On Friday, the Navajo Department of Health, in coordination with the Navajo Epidemiology Center and the Navajo Area Indian Health Service, reported 26 new COVID-19 positive cases for the Navajo Nation and no recent deaths. The total number of deaths remains 1,260 as previously reported on Thursday. Reports indicate that 16,430 individuals have recovered from COVID-19, and 257,625 COVID-19 tests have been administered. The total number of positive COVID-19 cases is now 30,239.

Navajo Nation COVID-19 positive cases by Service Unit:

- Chinle Service Unit: 5,533
- Crownpoint Service Unit: 2,906
- Ft. Defiance Service Unit: 3,604
- Gallup Service Unit: 4,769
- Kayenta Service Unit: 2,684
- Shiprock Service Unit: 5,079
- Tuba City Service Unit: 3,672
- Winslow Service Unit: 1,974

*18 residences with COVID-19 positive cases are not specific enough to place them accurately in a Service Unit.


On Friday, the state of Arizona reported 1,302 new cases, Utah reported 444, and New Mexico reported 126. The Navajo Department of Health issued Public Health Emergency Order No. 2021-008 on Friday, reinstating the Stay-At-Home order requiring all residents of the Navajo Nation to stay home and refrain from unnecessary travel to help limit the further spread of COVID-19 and the variants. The new public health order is available online at: <https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>. The daily curfew remains in effect from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. (MDT).

On March 31, the Navajo Nation announced the first confirmed case of the U.K. variant followed by the first case of the California variant, B.1.429, on April 6.

“The Stay-At-Home order is reinstated to help lessen the spread of COVID-19 and the variants here on the Navajo Nation. Two weeks ago, we had one day with zero reported cases and today, we have 26 new cases, 12 of which are from one community in the eastern portion of the Navajo Nation. The data indicates that residents are traveling more and more and holding in-person family gatherings. We have to do better and respect the words and advice of our public health experts. Think of all the sacrifices that our frontline warriors have made for us all. They come into contact with COVID-19 positive individuals and fight for their lives every day. So, before you decide to travel or hold an in-person gathering, think about the risks and think about our health care workers and the risks they are taking for us each day. Stay home as much as possible, wear a mask, practice social distancing, avoid large in-person gatherings, and wash your hands often,” said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

Improve how your mask protects you

Wear a mask correctly helps to prevent getting and spreading COVID-19.



Two important ways to make sure your mask works the best it can:

- (1) Make sure your mask fits snugly against your face. Gaps can let air with respiratory droplets leak in and out around the edges of the mask.
- (2) Pick a mask with layers. A mask with layers will stop more respiratory droplets getting inside your mask or escaping from your mask if you are sick.

Choose a mask with a nose wire

- A nose wire is a metal strip along the top of the mask.
- Nose wires prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask.
- Bend the nose wire over your nose to fit close to your face.

Check your mask fits snugly

- Be sure it covers your nose, mouth, and chin. With your hands check for gaps around the outside edges of the mask.
- Make sure no air is flowing from the top and sides of the mask.
- You should feel warm air come through the front of the mask and see it move in and out when you breathe.

Add Layers of material

2 ways to layer

- (1) Use a cloth mask that has multiple layers of fabric.
- (2) Wear one disposable mask underneath a cloth mask.

- The second mask should push the edges of the inner mask against your face.

Make sure you can see and breathe easily

- Knot the ear loops of a 3-ply face mask where they join the edge of the mask. Fold and tuck the unneeded material under the edges.

DIKOS NTSAAGII-19 CORONAVIRUS

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[@navajodephealth](https://www.instagram.com/navajodephealth)
[#DineDabidii](https://www.facebook.com/navajodephealth)

Health care facilities across the Navajo Nation continue to administer COVID-19 vaccines during drive-thru events or by appointment. If you would like to receive the vaccine, please contact your health care provider for more information for your Service Unit.

“Vaccinations are key to fighting COVID-19 and the variants. According to the public health experts, fully vaccinated individuals are able to push back on the virus if they become infected. Even if you are fully vaccinated, it’s very important that you continue to take all precautions. Please help to inform your elders and others about the variants and benefits of receiving the vaccine. Continue to pray and be safe,” said Vice President Myron Lizer.

For more information, including helpful prevention tips, and resources to help stop the spread of COVID-19, visit the Navajo Department of Health’s COVID-19 website: <http://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>. For COVID-19 related questions and information, call (928) 871-7014.

NEZ-LIZER ADMINISTRATION APPROVES OVER \$54 MILLION FOR HEAVY EQUIPMENT NEEDS AND WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

On Jan. 30, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, First Lady Phefelia Nez, and Vice President Myron Lizer came together with members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council at Navajo Veterans Memorial Park in Window Rock, Ariz., to sign into law Resolution CJA-01-21, approving over \$54 million from the Navajo Nation's Síhasin Fund to secure heavy equipment to help meet local community needs and for water infrastructure projects that will bring clean water to many Navajo families.

"Through the CARES Act funds, NTUA, NECA, Division of Community Development, and others made progress and completed 719 power line connections to homes and additional waterlines, water cistern systems, bathroom additions, and other projects that have helped many elders and disabled in remote areas. Due to the CARES Act deadline that was initially set for the end of 2020, some of the projects were not completed and those funds then helped our people through the Hardship Assistance Program. With the \$54 million that we signed and approved today, many of those water projects will be completed and we are also empowering the chapters to fulfill many local needs with the purchase of heavy equipment including graders, backhoes, utility vehicles, flatbeds, and other equipment. This was a collaborative effort that involved the chapters, so they now have to take on the responsibility of maintaining the equipment and ensuring that elders, disabled, and many others are assisted as much as possible," said President Nez.

The 24th Navajo Nation Council approved the resolution, sponsored by Speaker Seth Damon, on Jan. 15, 2021 by a vote of 20-1. The resolution signed into law provides nearly \$24 million for heavy equipment and approximately \$30 million for water projects.

"We thank the 24th Navajo Nation Council for their support of this bill to help empower our officials at the local level. Through the CARES Act funds, many Navajo businesses and contractors have been hired to work on infrastructure projects in partnership with NTUA, NECA, and others. In addition, tax revenues and jobs were created and will carry forward with the funds that we have approved today for water projects. Recently, our administration received a letter from an elderly Navajo woman who received running water and a new bathroom addition thanks to the CARES Act dollars. She expressed her appreciation and stated that she no longer has to haul water many miles to her home and can now do her laundry and take a warm shower in her home. Those are the positive changes and improvements that we don't hear much about,



but they are happening and lives are being improved," said Vice President Lizer.

Council members in attendance for the signing ceremony included Jamie Henio, Mark Freeland, Raymond Smith, Jr., Edison Wauneka, Pernell Halona, Herman Daniels, Jr., and Wilson Stewart, Jr. The Council members thanked their local chapter officials, Division of Community Development, and others who developed the legislation and helped advocate for the approval of the funds.

President Nez also used the line-item veto authority to overstrike approximately \$8.7 million for several items including \$75,000 for a new baseball field, Gold King Mine damage assessment, and other projects that could be funded with other funding sources.

"We carefully evaluated each item and with each of the seven items that were line-item vetoed, we support the intent, however we believe the funds can come from other sources other than the Síhasin Fund, which is intended for infrastructure, economic development, and other specific purposes that are outlined in the Síhasin Fund policy," added President Nez.



NAVAJO NATION OPPOSES ARIZONA BILL THAT OPENS DOOR TO SEGREGATING NAVAJO AND HOPI PEOPLE AND DRASTICALLY REDUCING FUNDS FOR DIRECT SERVICES

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer issued letters to the Arizona State Senate and Gov. Doug Ducey on March 8, outlining the Navajo Nation's opposition to Arizona S.B. 1653, which seeks approval from the State Legislature and the Governor's Office to establish a "Joint Study Committee on County Boundaries to research and report on the fiscal and related impacts of a change in the boundary between Apache County and Navajo County."

The measure would potentially put the State Legislature on a path toward creating a new and separate county for the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe, without the benefit of property tax revenue that provides the majority of funding for managing county roads, waste management, emergency management and preparedness, and many other direct services for Navajo and non-Navajo people who reside in both counties. Lands held in trust by the federal government are not subject to property taxes because they are considered federal lands. Proponents of the bill argue that creating a new county would allow tribes access to sales tax revenues, however sales tax revenues are far less than the property tax revenue that Apache County and Navajo County currently receive.

"Across the country, in a time when people of color are standing up against racial inequalities, discrimination, and injustices, we have a bill being fast-tracked through the Arizona State Legislature that would open the door to segregating the Navajo and Hopi people into one county and that would almost eliminate the financial resources needed to provide direct services for citizens in Apache County and Navajo County. This divisive initiative has been attempted many times before and failed over and over. We do not need a study committee to tell us that creating a new and separate county for tribes would be very detrimental to the direct services and quality of life for all residents, and lead to more inequality. We ask all State Legislators and Governor Ducey to do what is right for our Navajo people by opposing S.B. 1653," said President Nez.

S.B. 1653 was fast-tracked through Senate committees, and amended to provide funding for the study committee, and now awaits consideration by the full Senate. The Navajo Nation also anticipates a similar bill to be introduced in the House.

"If this bill becomes law, it would fund a study committee that may very well tell us what we already know – that creating a new county specifically for

Navajo and Hopi people will nearly eliminate all county funding for direct services. There is a misguided perception that Native Americans do not pay taxes, but in reality, tribal nations contribute greatly to the tax revenues generated for the state of Arizona. Many Navajo people purchase goods and services off of the Navajo Nation and that creates millions of dollars in revenue for other communities and counties. We call upon the elected leaders in the State Senate and House to do what is right and stop S.B. 1653 from moving forward," said Vice President Lizer.

The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to work with state, county, and other officials to oppose S.B. 1653.

GET VACCINATED TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR COMMUNITY

Did you know?
When you get vaccinated you're protecting your community. This is called **community immunity**.

HOW COMMUNITY IMMUNITY WORKS
Germs can travel fast through the community and make a lot of people sick.
• If enough people get sick it can lead to an outbreak
• When enough people get vaccinated it prevents the germs from traveling easily from person to person, and
• The whole community is less likely to get the disease

COMMUNITY IMMUNITY PROTECTS
• Everyone in the community
• Especially people who can't get vaccinated for certain diseases, such as:
 o Serious allergies
 o Weakened immune system or failing immune system
• People who do not have a strong immune response from vaccinations

THE BENEFITS OF GETTING THE COVID-19 VACCINE
• Helps protect you from getting COVID-19
• Prevents severe illness if you get COVID-19
• Protects older adults aged 65 and older, and
• Who are at higher-risk for severe illness

CONTINUE TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS BY:
• Keep a 6 feet distance from others
• Stay away from crowds indoors and outdoors
• Avoid having visitors in your home
• Use a well-fitting mask that is 2-3 layers even after vaccination
• Wash hands often and use hand sanitizer
• Isolate and quarantine if you are sick or have been exposed

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(E) ncoronavirus.info@navajo-nn.gov
www.navajo-nn.gov/COVID-19

DIKOS NTSAAI GII-19
CONCERNED

Benefits of Getting A COVID-19 VACCINE

It is understandable why some people may be concerned about getting the vaccine. That is why health experts are making sure all vaccines are safe for everyone.

BUILDING PROTECTION
• COVID-19 can cause severe illness and even death in some people
• There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you
• COVID-19 infection can spread to family, friends and others

THE BENEFITS OF GETTING A COVID-19 VACCINE
• Helps protect you from getting COVID-19
• Prevents severe illness if you get COVID-19
• Helps protect people around you from getting COVID-19
• Protects older adults aged 65 and older
• Protects people who are at higher-risk of severe illness

CAN A COVID-19 VACCINE GIVE YOU COVID-19?
• No, it will not give you COVID-19
• The vaccine does not have the virus that causes COVID-19
• Sometimes getting the COVID-19 vaccine can cause symptoms. This is normal, because your body is building up immunity

SOME REASONS TO GET VACCINATED:
• Protecting your culture, language, and identity
• Protecting yourself and loved ones
• Promoting a healthier life
• Avoid getting COVID-19
• Building your immunity
• Helping stop the virus

GETTING VACCINATED
• Get vaccinated when it is made available to you

CONTINUE PROTECTING YOURSELF AND OTHERS BY:
• Wearing a mask
• Staying 6 feet away from others
• Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds
• Using hand sanitizer
• Staying home while sick
• Avoiding large gatherings
• Avoiding having visitors in your home

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CONCERNED

PRESIDENT NEZ AND VICE PRESIDENT LIZER APPROVE RESOLUTION TO FUND THE NAVAJO VETERANS ADMINISTRATION FOR THE REMAINDER OF FY 2021 TO HELP VETERANS

On March 31, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer signed into law Resolution CMA-13-21, which will fund the Navajo Veterans Administration for the remainder of the current fiscal year through the end of September 2021 and allow the office to provide financial assistance for Navajo veterans.

When the FY 2021 Comprehensive Budget was making its way through the Navajo Nation Council's Standing Committees last year, the budget was amended to fund only half of the fiscal year budget for the Navajo Veterans Administration "to allow for more time to obtain additional information before approving the Fiscal Year 2021 budgets," according to the current resolution.

"Across the board, we know that we have to do better to support our veterans. With the signing of this resolution, the Navajo Veterans Administration can now provide more assistance to Navajo veterans. As we look forward, we continue to seek the Council's support for legislation to fund a housing manufacturing facility to construct homes for veterans and others. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recently announced

that the Navajo Nation will receive nearly \$50 million, in addition to the annual Indian Housing Block Grant, through the American Rescue Plan Act to carry out affordable housing for our people. Veterans, elders, and disabled must be included in the allocation and use of those funds and we have to push Navajo Housing Authority to do better as well," said President Nez.

The legislation, sponsored by Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr., was unanimously approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council on March 26 by a vote of 23-0.

"We thank Vice Chair Raymond Smith and the entire Council for their support. We have to continue working together to address the internal issues that hinder support and services for veterans. Our administration looks forward to addressing the housing manufacturing legislation once it is introduced into the legislative process," said Vice President Lizer.

Resolution CMA-13-21 is effective immediately with the approval of President Nez and Vice President Lizer. The Nez-Lizer Administration thanks the 24th Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Nation Veterans Advisory Council, and other veterans' organizations for their support.

PRESIDENT NEZ DISCUSSES THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT AND OTHER PRIORITIES WITH CONGRESSMAN O'HALLERAN

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez met with Arizona Congressman Tom O'Halleran (AZ-D) in Window Rock, Ariz. on March 31, to discuss the implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act, consultations with federal agencies, transportation infrastructure priorities, recommended changes to federal regulations, water sanitation projects, and the status of the Bears Ears National Monument.

"Congressman Tom O'Halleran has been a strong advocate for the Navajo people. We were pleased to update him and his staff on our progress, working with the 24th Navajo Nation Council and the Judicial Branch, to implement the American Rescue Plan Act funds that are anticipated to arrive in the coming weeks. In order to expedite the completion of more infrastructure projects to provide long-term benefits for our communities, we also need our federal partners to consider changes to federal regulations and policies that often hinder progress on tribal lands. Our administration has developed a white paper that outlines specific recommendations to change regulations under several federal agencies. I look forward to continuing our work with Congressman to move forward on these issues and many more," said President Nez.

On March 29, President Nez met with the 24th Navajo Nation Council and Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne to discuss the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan. The Act provides \$20 billion for tribes – \$1 billion

is to be allocated equally among the 574 federally recognized tribes while the U.S. Department of the Treasury will decide how the remaining funds will be distributed to tribes.

“The general strategy for the American Rescue Plan funds should be to maximize and leverage funding each of the funding opportunities, not only from the \$20 billion, but also from the other pots of funding that will become available. We have been engaged in tribal consultation sessions with various federal agencies, regarding the American Rescue Plan. We are recommending that the funds be distributed as direct funding to tribes, and not in the form of grants that may require additional documentation and applications,” said President Nez.

During the three branch chiefs meeting on Monday, President Nez also spoke about the Nez-Lizer Administration’s work with the Biden-Harris Administration, congressional members, and federal agencies to advocate for a fair funding formula for federally-recognized tribes based on four factors that include population, land base, number of employees, and direct COVID-19 impacts measured by coronavirus infections, deaths, and other key factors. President Nez also outlined general priorities related to direct relief, infrastructure development, economic recovery, housing, long-term planning, and more.

President Nez also joined Congressman O’Halloran on Monday, to mark the introduction of his new bill, the National Energy Workforce and Providing Recovering Opportunities to Manage the Industry’s Shifting Economics also known as the “NEW PROMISE Act,” which aims to provide economic development resources to communities affected by the closure of the Navajo Generating Station, and those like it across the United States. The bill would also establish job and skills training programs for displaced employees, and invest in affected tribal areas.

“NGS was a powerhouse for northern Arizona and the many rural and tribal families who relied on the good-paying jobs it provided,” said Congressman O’Halloran. “With the continued challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism has plummeted, especially from the international visitors the Page community was so used to welcoming. In introducing my updated NEW PROMISE Act, I am taking into account the concerns of tribal leadership, county, local, and statewide stakeholders to provide an all-of-the-above recovery approach for the community of Page, and so many communities like it across rural America, where hardworking folks are out of a job due to no fault of their own.”

The Nez-Lizer Administration is also in the process of delivering a “white paper” to the Biden-Harris Administration, Congressional members, and federal agencies that outlines specific recommendations for changes to federal regulations



and policies that would improve the process for development and improvements on tribal lands. In addition, the Navajo Nation Washington Office and Navajo Division of Transportation are leading efforts to advocate for a transportation priorities package in anticipation of the introduction of a transportation bill in Congress.

President Nez briefly spoke about the Navajo Nation’s ongoing advocacy for the full restoration and expansion of the Bears Ears National Monument for the protection of 1.9 million acres in the southeastern portion of Utah. The landscape is the ancestral home of many southwestern tribes and the birthplace of Navajo Headman Manuelito. Tribal nations depend on the land within the region to sustain their traditional livelihoods and cultural practices, such as hunting, gathering, and ceremonies.

On Dec. 28 2016, former President Obama designated 1.35 million acres of land under the Bears Ears National Monument, in accordance with the Antiquities Act of 1906. President Trump later reduced the size of the designation by 85-percent, or 202,000 acres, which continue to be contested in court by several tribes including the Navajo Nation. The Nez-Lizer Administration, along with several other tribes, continues to support the restoration and expansion of the Bears Ears National Monument to encompass 1.9 million acres.



DEB HAALAND BECOMES THE FIRST NATIVE AMERICAN CONFIRMED TO LEAD THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer are pleased to congratulate Deb Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna, in becoming the first Native American to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior under the Biden-Harris Administration.

“This is an unprecedented and monumental day for all First People of this country. Words cannot express how overjoyed and proud we are to see one of our own confirmed to serve in this high-level position. It’s a wonderful feeling that we can now refer to her as Madam Secretary. Today’s historic confirmation sets us on a better path to righting the wrongs of the past with the Federal government and inspires hope in our people, especially our young people. It gives us a seat at the table to offer a new and different perspective from a person that has experienced the reality of adversities and challenges of growing up on what Federal officials refer to as ‘Indian reservations.’ On behalf of First Lady Phefelia Nez and our family, we congratulate Secretary Haaland and her family,” said President Nez.

In November, President Nez publicly supported Congresswoman Haaland’s nomination stating, “As a member of Congress, she has been a strong voice for all tribal nations and the people of New Mexico on a wide variety of issues including land management, clean energy, economic development, social justice, and job creation. Her



President Nez and Vice President Lizer with New Mexico Representative Debra A. Haaland in 2019.

ability to weigh the issues from social, economic, and political standpoints is unique and something that is not easily found.”

Vice President Myron Lizer joined President Nez praising Secretary Haaland’s appointment stating, “Second Lady Dottie Lizer and I congratulate Secretary Haaland and look forward to working with her and the rest of our Federal partners to address some of the challenges related to the protection of Federal lands, water resources, education, and many others. To have one of our Native American people in this prestigious position is heartwarming and long overdue.”

STATE OF ARIZONA OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZES NATIONAL NAVAJO CODE TALKERS DAY

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer applaud the State of Arizona’s recognition and honoring of the Navajo Code Talkers, with Monday’s signing of Arizona Senate Bill 1802 by Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, which officially declares Aug. 14 as National Navajo Code Talkers Day throughout the state.

“It’s wonderful to have the State of Arizona honor and recognize the sacrifices and contributions of the Navajo Code Talkers. It’s long overdue. We only have a few Navajo Code Talkers with us to this day, but we pay tribute to all of them and their families. Their legacy is strengthened with today’s signing of this bill and we hope that this will also help to share the stories of our Code Talkers so that many more people



throughout the state are aware of everything that they gave for our country. Thank you to Arizona Sen. Jamescita Peshlakai, a member of the Navajo Nation, for sponsoring the bill and getting it through the State Legislature,” said President Nez.

Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan issued a proclamation designating Aug. 14 as National Navajo Code Talkers Day. In 2014, the state of Arizona passed legislation declaring August 14 as Navajo Code Talkers Day in the state. The bill signed on Monday recognizes the national proclamation signed by Reagan.

“The Navajo people have had many warriors throughout our history, but today’s recognition by the State of Arizona is very special for our Navajo Code Talkers and their families. We appreciate the support of the state legislators and Gov. Ducey. Words will never be enough to express our admiration and appreciation for the Navajo Code Talkers, but today’s signing of Senate Bill 1802 is a great honor. We continue to honor and pray for all of our Navajo Code Talkers and their loved ones,” said Vice President Lizer.

In accordance with the bill, if National Navajo Code Talkers Day falls on a day other than Sunday, the Sunday following Aug. 14 is to be observed as the holiday.

“It’s important that all Arizonans remember the service and bravery of the Navajo Code Talkers,” said Sen. Peshlakai. “Their crucial service during WWII will not be forgotten, and we will continue to honor them every August 14th. Thank you to everyone who supported Senate Bill 1802.”

“The Navajo Code Talkers are American heroes. They assisted on every major operation involving the U.S. Marines in the Pacific theatre, using their native language to come up with an unbreakable code. More than 400 Code Talkers answered the call to serve our nation, and Arizona is grateful for their dedication to protecting our nation. I’m proud to sign legislation that makes National Navajo Code Talkers day an official holiday, and I thank Senator Peshlakai for leading on this initiative,” said Gov. Ducey.

VICE PRESIDENT LIZER COMMENDS NTEC’S COMMUNITY HEATING RESOURCE PROGRAM THAT PROVIDES FREE COAL TO NAVAJO FAMILIES

On Friday, March 26, Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer visited Navajo Mine in Farmington, N.M., where he showed his appreciation to mine workers, management, and visited with local residents who received coal through Navajo Transitional Energy Company’s annual Community Heating Resource Program, which concluded its seasonal work this week.

Since October, NTEC has provided nearly 11,500 tons of coal, free of charge, to Navajo families to help heat their homes and keep them warm throughout the winter season. NTEC also delivered coal to 101 chapters over the last few months, while taking precautions to keep their workers and residents safe from COVID-19.

“I am very appreciative of NTEC’s efforts to assist families through the Community Heating Resource Program, by providing free coal to chapters during the winter season. Not only does NTEC provide the necessary energy source to power homes and communities, but the company also employs hundreds of Navajo men and women and gives back to our communities through scholarship awards, charitable contributions, and support and relief during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Vice President Lizer.

He also extended his appreciation to the Navajo Mine employees and management working on-site stating, “I thank all of the NTEC employees for investing their talent and skilled workmanship to provide for our communities and their families. I will continue to support NTEC’s commitment to being a resourceful, safe producer of coal, while seeking economic and environmental sustainability for the Navajo people.”

According to NTEC, workers delivered close to 10,600 tons of coal this season, which nearly doubled last year’s output of 5,900 tons. The Community Heating Resource Program serviced more than 9,600 community members directly since October, servicing households, chapters, and Hopi villages. Each family received approximately one ton of coal.

When the Community Heating Resource Program began in the 1980s, community members would pick and load the coal into their vehicles themselves. With recent improvements, community members drive up and NTEC workers load the coal using heavy equipment.

“We are extremely proud to see how our program has continued to help Navajo people stay warm in the winter months. To see Navajo people, chapters and communities utilize the resources of our coal program shows NTEC is providing a much-needed service to the Navajo people,” said NTEC CEO Clark Moseley.

The next Community Heating Resource Program season will commence with chapter outreach and meetings over the summer and NTEC anticipates coal deliveries to start in August 2021.

THREE BRANCH CHIEFS HOLD INITIAL DISCUSSION ON THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

On March 29, Speaker Seth Damon welcomed Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Navajo Nation Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne to a three-branch chiefs discussion with the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee to discuss the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act, during a virtual work session hosted by the 24th Navajo Nation Council.

During the work session, the three branch chiefs spoke about the need to work together to implement the American Rescue Act funds. On March 11, U.S. President Joe Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act into law, a \$1.9 trillion relief package designed to help the United States recover from the devastating impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Act provides \$20 billion for tribes – \$1 billion is to be allocated equally among the 574 federally recognized tribes while the U.S. Department of the Treasury will decide how the remaining funds will be distributed to tribes.

“The general strategy for the American Rescue Plan funds should be to maximize and leverage funding each of the funding opportunities, not only from the \$20 billion, but also from the other pots of funding that will become available. We have been engaged in tribal consultation sessions with various federal agencies, regarding the American Rescue Plan. We are recommending that the funds be distributed as direct funding to tribes, and not in the form of grants that may require additional documentation and applications,” said President Nez.

He also spoke about the Nez-Lizer Administration’s work with the Biden-Harris Administration, congressional members, and federal agencies to advocate for a fair funding formula for federally-recognized tribes for the anticipated distribution of funding that was approved through the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act. President Nez also outlined general priorities related to direct relief, infrastructure development, economic recovery, housing, long-term planning, and more.

“Today’s discussion among the three branch chiefs helped lay the foundation for the Navajo Nation’s recovery beyond Covid-19. With funding coming to the Navajo Nation through the American Rescue Plan Act, we hope to see the best possible outcomes for the Navajo People. These funds will support many important infrastructure and recovery initiatives that will positively impact the health and wellbeing of our Nation’s citizens. At this critical point, we continue to advocate for a funding formula for Tribal Nations that uses enrollment data and other key conditions in the distribution of ARPA funds,” said Speaker Damon.

Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne said that the Judicial Branch is looking at immediate, midterm and long-term needs related to the COVID-19 public health emergency. She also reiterated that the Judicial Branch is interested in accessing other sources of funding to address the myriad issues the Navajo Nation faces in response to the pandemic, including Judicial Branch functions that address mental health services, prevention and treatment of substance abuse, veterans court services and support for older Americans. She noted that the Judicial Branch has been meeting with Public Safety to discuss prioritization of needs for judicial/public safety facilities. She further added that an assessment on how the CARES Fund money was spent by the Navajo Nation should be done to improve the processes in utilizing ARP funds.

The U.S. Treasury Department has not identified the amount that the Navajo Nation will be receiving, however, the Nez-Lizer Administration has recommended a funding formula based on four factors that include population, land base, number of employees, and direct COVID-19 impacts measured by coronavirus infections, deaths, and other key factors. President Nez also recommended that the Navajo Nation save its own funds, such as those from the Sihasin Fund and the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance, and use the American Rescue Plan funds first.

“There were many lessons learned from the CARES Act that can be applied to the American Rescue Plan. We have to improve from the past and do better. We strongly recommend that we revisit CARES Act projects that were not previously completed due to the stringent deadlines included in the initial bill. The Navajo Nation’s Sihasin Fund remains, but the funds continue to be spent down at this point. Many, if not all of the current/ongoing Sihasin Fund projects should be leveraged with ARP funds. UUFB and other general funds should be saved if an ARP fund can be used instead,” added President Nez.

Among other funding, the American Rescue Plan also included direct stimulus payments of \$1,400 for individuals, extends unemployment compensation, continues existing eviction and foreclosure moratoriums, funding for schools to mitigate COVID-19, and provides funds for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.

NAVAJO NATION RECOGNIZES THE MONTH OF APRIL AS “SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH” ACKNOWLEDGING VICTIMS, SURVIVORS, AND ADVOCATES

On April 1, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, First Lady Phefelina Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, and Second Lady Dottie Lizer signed a proclamation to recognize the month of April as “Sexual Assault Awareness Month” to acknowledge victims, survivors, and advocates and to increase prevention of sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment.

The proclamation states that the Navajo Nation recognizes the physical, mental, and spiritual impacts that the crimes of rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment has on Diné people, families, and communities. Sexual assault includes any sexual conduct or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the individual.

“Sexual assault impacts far too many of our Navajo women and children. We must support one another, especially when an accusation is made – we must believe the victims and investigate to the fullest extent. Women and children are sacred, and supporting their healing and voicing their pain is central to ending violence. One of the strongest forms of support is to demand justice for victims and survivors and hold offenders accountable. Sexual harassment, assault, and abuse can happen anywhere, including online spaces. Each of us plays a role in protecting those we love, including our grandparents, parents, spouses, daughters, and sons. We must commit ourselves to ending sexual violence and supporting all survivors in order to begin the process of healing for the individuals and our communities,” said First Lady Nez.

The Bureau of Indian Health reports that at least one in four Navajo children experience some form of sexual abuse. The Navajo Nation School Youth Behavior Survey found that one in 10 girls and one in 20 boys surveyed had been physically forced to have sex against their will. The crime of rape accounts for a large percentage of violent crimes reported to Navajo Nation law enforcement, with an average of one case reported every day.

Additionally, the National Institute of Justice survey found that more than one in two Native American women and more than one in four Native men have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. Navajo children, women, and LGBTQI/Two-spirit are at increased risk for sexual harassment and violence.

“If you or anyone you know is experiencing these types of abuse anywhere, including online or social media spaces, call the police and reach out to someone you trust. Sexual assault is a crime and is not something that should be taken lightly or ignored. Do not be afraid to speak out. One month is not enough to solve this serious issue, but we appreciate the grassroots organizations and groups, who support awareness and prevention year-round,” said Second Lady Lizer.

The proclamation also calls on all Navajo organizations and community members to help prevent sexual violence and support survivors of sexual assault by promoting the values of healthy relationships, equality, and respect. Every Navajo Nation citizen has a right to be safe from sexual assault in their homes, schools, and places of business.

“Sexual Assault Awareness Month calls attention to the reality of sexual assaults and violence in our communities here on the Navajo Nation and beyond. The proclamation is a commitment to supporting victims, survivors, and advocates to help prevent sexual violence and to educate individuals and communities about prevention. We have many dedicated advocates including Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty, chair of the Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee, and community-based organizers who are committed to addressing these issues in our communities,” said President Nez.

Crimes of a sexual nature affect survivors’ mental, spiritual, and physical well-being. They are not a single crime but repeated crimes inflicted on women, men, children, and the disabled.

“We can work together to raise awareness. It is a major public health, human rights, and social justice issue that requires more attention. Awareness activities can include walks, virtual educational programs, vigils, and prayer circles to honor victims and survivors. Talking about the issue is an important part of the healing journey for families and communities. Survivors also need to know that their community and leaders support them,” said Vice President Lizer.

The month of April is also National Sexual Assault Awareness Month across the country. For more support, information, or advice, call the free and confidential National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1(800)-656-HOPE.

TOM PLATERO CONFIRMED AS THE DIVISION DIRECTOR FOR THE NAVAJO NATION DIVISION OF GENERAL SERVICES

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer commend the 24th Navajo Nation Council's unanimous confirmation of Tom Platero, as the Division Director for the Navajo Nation Division of General Services. Platero was appointed by President Nez and Vice President Lizer in February to replace former Director, Lomardo C. Aseret, who entered retirement due to health concerns.

“We greatly appreciate the unanimous support from the 24th Navajo Nation Council members. Mr. Platero has hit the ground running since he was appointed. He brings extensive knowledge and experience to the Division of General Services that will serve the Navajo Nation very well,” said President Nez.

Council Delegate Daniel Tso sponsored the legislation to confirm Platero, which was approved on Friday by the Council by a vote of 23-0.

“I am happy to be back working with the Navajo Nation. It is truly an honor to serve and to work together with my colleagues. I thank President Nez and Vice President for the opportunity to serve our people once again and for the support from the 24th Navajo Nation Council,” stated Platero following his confirmation.

Platero is Táchii'nii and born for Tó baazhni'ázhí. His maternal grandfather is Bit'ahnii and his paternal grandfather is Áshijhi. He is originally from Round Rock, Ariz. on the Navajo Nation.



Prior to his appointment, Platero served as the Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Office of Legislative Services from 2012 to 2020 and also previously served as the Division Director for the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation from 2004-2011. His professional experience also includes serving as the principal contract analyst for the Department of Workforce Development and the Asst. Department Manager for the Department of Head Start.

“Mr. Platero’s extensive experience has allowed him and his team to begin making positive changes for the Division of General Services. We are confident that he will continue to serve the Nation well and produce results that benefit the programs under the Division and for our communities,” said Vice President Lizer.

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As the head of the Division of General Services, Platero is tasked with overseeing the Telecommunications and Utilities Department, Department of Information Technology, Employee Housing Program, Facilities Maintenance Department, Insurance Services Department, Records Management Department, Air Transportation Department, Navajo Transit System, and Fleet Management Department.

CONGRESS APPROVES THE \$1.9 TRILLION AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN TO PROVIDE COVID-19 RELIEF, STIMULUS CHECKS, UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer commend the passage of the American Rescue Plan by Congress on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, a \$1.9 trillion relief package designed to help the United States recover from the devastating impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which includes \$20 billion for federally-recognized tribes to help mitigate the impacts of the coronavirus.

The U.S. House passed the original American Rescue Plan bill on Feb. 17. On March 6, the Senate passed its version of the bill, which was sent back to the House for a final vote on Wednesday. President Biden is expected to sign the rescue package into law later this week.

“We appreciate the support of Congress and our federal partners and for working together with our administration to ensure that all tribal nations were included in the American Recovery Plan. We look forward to President Biden signing the measure into law and we are eager to continue working with the Department of the Treasury. The bill provides significant discretion for the Secretary of the Treasury to determine funding for each tribe. Our administration recommended that allocations for tribes be based on four factors that include population, land base, number of employees, and direct COVID-19 impacts measured by coronavirus infections, deaths, and other key factors. The Navajo Nation was hit very hard by COVID-19, but thanks to our health care workers, frontline warriors, and our Navajo people, we are pushing back and fighting hard to mitigate the impacts and save lives. With the new relief funds, we anticipate providing more direct relief and assistance for our Navajo people as well as funding projects that provide long-term benefits,” said President Nez.

In addition, the American Rescue Plan would also provide approximately \$6 billion for Indian Health Service, \$1.2 billion for HUD tribal and Native Hawaiian housing programs, \$1.1 billion for educational programs including the Bureau of Indian Education, over \$1 billion for tribal child care programs and \$75 million for tribal TANF, \$900 million for Bureau of Indian Affairs programs, \$600 million for economic and infrastructure investments, \$20 million to mitigate the impact of on Native languages, and \$19 million to help combat domestic violence.

“The Navajo Nation is fighting hard to mitigate through this pandemic. With the CARES Act funds, we were able to provide direct relief for our Navajo people in the form of financial relief, PPEs, food and water, and cleaning supplies. We also assisted businesses and entrepreneurs who were hit hard by the pandemic. Through the collaboration of many entities, the Nation was also able to provide water resources, bathroom additions, electricity, internet service, and other improvements for many families and communities. We look forward to continuing building off of that success and working together to make more progress,” said Vice President Lizer.

The American Rescue Plan also included \$1,400 stimulus checks for qualified individuals and dependents, extends unemployment compensation, continues existing eviction and foreclosure moratoriums, funding for schools to mitigate COVID-19, and provides funds for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.